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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [UNSC](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR RICE'S INTRODUCTORY MEETING WITH
AFGHANISTAN PR ZAHIR TANIN

Classified By: AMBASSADOR SUSAN RICE, FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (C) Summary: In a February 12 introductory meeting with Afghanistan PermRep Zahir Tanin, Ambassador Rice emphasized U.S. commitment to Afghanistan and its desire to work in the mutual interests of both countries. She noted that the Administration,s top-to-bottom review of its Afghanistan policy does not prejudice any specific outcome. Tanin emphasized 1) the importance of U.S. support to the Afghanistan government and to President Karzai specifically in the run-up to elections; and 2) the linkages between security and governance in Afghanistan, as well as the effect of the regional dimension. Tanin also discussed his role as vice-chair of the UN General Assembly,s informal plenary on Security Council reform and asked for Ambassador Rice,s participation in a March roundtable event in New York on the situation of women in Afghanistan. End summary.

AFGHANISTAN

¶2. (C) Ambassador Tanin said the role of the U.S.-Afghanistan partnership was key to the success not only of Afghanistan, but the region. The new Administration has increased hopes everywhere, including Afghanistan, Tanin said. With these hopes comes expectations, and he vowed to work closely together for the greater interests of both Afghanistan and the U.S. When asked for his assessment of the situation in Afghanistan, Tanin bluntly noted that his country was not capable of self-sufficiency at the present time. Alluding to criticisms of President Karzai, he said "not everything" has been the President,s fault, although he acknowledged that the Afghanistan government bore a large measure of responsibility for its failures to govern and to gain the trust of its people.

¶3. (C) Tanin identified the current period leading up to Presidential elections as one that required careful attention because it put at risk the long-term objectives of security, development and stability in Afghanistan. From the point of view of Afghans, said Tanin, recent press reporting has led to the sense that the new administration is looking for new leadership in Afghanistan, and that there has been a downturn in relations between Kabul and Washington. He noted that until the Presidential elections, "you must deal with the government that is there" and cautioned not to "underestimate the role of leadership, for bad or good." If Karzai is not seen as supported by the U.S., the current period will become even more unstable. The recent bombings in Kabul indicated the extent of insecurity throughout Afghanistan, and demonstrated that "everything is possible," said Tanin. Ambassador Rice said some of the press reporting mischaracterized the Administration,s discussions on Afghanistan. She asked that Tanin convey to Kabul the Administration,s openness during this review process, and the strong national interest of the U.S. in a successful Afghanistan.

¶4. (C) From a long-term perspective, Tanin said security and governance were the keys to stabilizing Afghanistan. He cautioned against seeing Afghanistan as a secondary issue

behind Pakistan, and said both countries could not be dealt with in the same way. The threat - al Qaida, the Taliban and related terrorist groups - was the same for both countries, but the solutions would be different. Tanin said these terror groups were all part of the same body and at the center lay the ISI. (Tanin acknowledged that this was a controversial position.) Progress must be made against these groups, because for Afghanistan to develop, all regions of the country needed to have minimum security conditions. In areas where there was no security, the Taliban operated freely and consequently, there was no trust in the national government.

15. (C) In addition to security, Tanin emphasized governance, under which he included development, the fight against corruption and capacity-building. He acknowledged the government's problems with corruption, but said the international community also needed to focus on the other side of the coin: waste in development aid and the low percentage actually given to Afghans. In this context, he emphasized the crucial importance of job creation.

UNAMA

16. (C) Turning to UNAMA, Tanin asked why there had been no mention of the UN in recent USG statements related to Afghanistan and to the naming of Special Envoy Holbrooke. He said that the UN is the only institution that can bring together the international community in Afghanistan. Ambassador Rice said the U.S. viewed the UN as a crucial piece to addressing problems in Afghanistan. She asked for Tanin's views regarding UNAMA, its performance and any

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potential need to adjust its mandate. Tanin said SRSRG Eide had done a good job in bringing order to the UN family in Afghanistan, but that more work was needed to improve civil-military coordination. Eide had good relations with the Afghanistan government and with Karzai. Tanin said he would carefully consider Ambassador Rice's questions regarding UNAMA and the mandate, and would convey his thoughts in the coming weeks. Tanin noted that UNAMA's mandate had been revised substantially last year, and that the goal for this year would be to take this new base and consider whether any additional concepts are needed. He recounted a discussion he had the day before with Russian DPR Dolgov, in which Dolgov noted Karzai's recent statements about civilian casualties and said Russia would work with Afghanistan to address the problems related to the international security presence. (Comment: Dolgov's statement tracks with Russia's increasingly unhelpful stance on Afghanistan issues in the Security Council, and previews that Russian will likely continue to be unhelpful during the UNAMA renewal in March and ISAF renewal in September. End comment.)

SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM

17. (C) As vice-chair of the GA's informal plenary on Security Council reform, Tanin briefed Ambassador Rice on the state of play in advance of intergovernmental negotiations beginning February 19. Referring to the Uniting for Consensus (UFC) bloc's focus on the "rules of the game," Tanin said Italy put at risk the authority of its Foreign Minister by having him involved even before the start of intergovernmental negotiations. Tanin said the informal plenary is a way to create the atmosphere of working together, even if it does not narrow the differences between the blocs. Tanin underscored that SC reform cannot move forward without the P5; he added that China and Russia had moved closer to the UFC position that any solution must enjoy "close to consensus." China told Tanin that "the spirit of UFC will guide (China)." Looking longer term, Tanin noted that Libya was in line to be President of the GA next year, and this would probably put a brake on further SC reform discussions. Therefore, it was important to take advantage

of a window over the next few months to lay down the groundwork for an eventual solution in one or two year,s time. In closing, he noted "this is not a personal mission for me," and said he did not want to be caught in "friendly fire."

18. (C) Ambassador Rice reviewed U.S. policy towards SC reform. The U.S. is open to reform, given that the world of the 21st century is different than that of 1945. However, any reform must not diminish the effectiveness of the Security Council. She said the U.S. does not have any specific position on numbers or configuration, and approaches intergovernmental negotiations with an open mind. She asked that the draft work plan for negotiations be shared a few days before February 19.

ROUNDTABLE ON WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN

19. (C) Tanin asked for Ambassador Rice,s participation in a proposed roundtable on women in Afghanistan, during March in New York. The roundtable would be organized in cooperation with UNIFEM. Ambassador Rice said she was open in principle, but asked for more details on the roundtable and on potential dates.
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